



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

National Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness



The Challenge



The Point in Time Count is intended to provide a snapshot of a community's homeless population. It is one way to collectively understand the scope and breadth of homelessness in our nation and our individual communities. The count is an important effort that ensures the voices of people experiencing homelessness in your community are heard and efforts are made to provide appropriate services. It also helps communities develop more effective plans and measure progress toward ending homelessness.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting

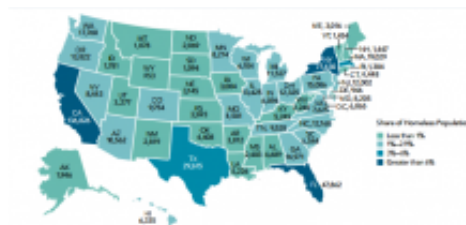


Prepare

Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **National Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness:** The annual count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for communities across the country to receive funding. During the last 10 days of January, thousands of volunteers canvass communities, as well as count and survey



individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Service providers nationwide choose one day during the 10-day period to count people in their communities who are living on the street and in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or domestic violence shelters.

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** HUD became a cabinet-level federal agency in 1965. *HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.*
- **Continuum of Care:** This is the HUD program that coordinates funding and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in a particular geographical area. The Continuum of Care coordinator will be able to let you know the most pressing needs for completing the count process.

Identify a Location

To volunteer to participate in counting or to help organize a count in your community, contact your [city's primary Continuum of Care coordinator](http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts) (<http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts>).

Browse Helpful Resources

- [City's primary Continuum of Care coordinator](http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts) (<http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts>)
- [Homelessness Resource Exchange](https://www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/) (<https://www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/>)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](http://www.endhomelessness.org/) (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/>)
- [PIT and HIC data since 2007](https://www.onecpd.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007/) (<https://www.onecpd.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007/>)
- [A guide to counting sheltered people experiencing homelessness](http://www.nceh.org/files/2027/) (<http://www.nceh.org/files/2027/>)
- [Learn the new requirements for completing HIC and PIT counts](https://www.onecpd.info/resource/2075/preparing-for-your-2013-housing-inventory-and-point-in-time-counts/) (<https://www.onecpd.info/resource/2075/preparing-for-your-2013-housing-inventory-and-point-in-time-counts/>)



Plan

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

Build a Team

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King,



Jr.'s impact and your own.

Set Goals

Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.
- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can plan for and promote The National Point in Time Count. Here are a few ideas:

- In coordination with the Continuum of care coordinator, organize your activities with those of the Point in Time Headquarters and other groups or organizations participating in the Count. More information on local efforts can be found at the [Homelessness Resource Exchange](http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts) (<http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewCocContacts>) .
- Order or print materials to provide information on available services to help end homelessness. Does the Continuum of Care or other service agencies in your community have materials to share? Will you need materials in languages other than English?
- Study and prepare to share the national results of the [previous year's Point-in-Time count](http://www.endhomelessness.org/blog/entry/2013-homeless-counts-interactive-map-update#.UgjqK230iM0) (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/blog/entry/2013-homeless-counts-interactive-map-update#.UgjqK230iM0>) with your group.
- [Incorporate learning into any service you do \(node/292\)](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue. (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)

Raise Resources for Equipment and Supplies

Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote the National Point in Time Count in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize to do lists for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Make sure team leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: promoting or participating in the National Point in Time Count for the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with pictures and videos and be sure to have participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to participants.



Communicate Your Message

Communication is a key part of any service project. You will need to communicate about:

- Getting volunteers to help you plan or implement your service activity
- Building Partnerships with potential collaborators or sponsors
- Raising funds or in-kind donations for your project
- Informing potential participants who might benefit from your service



Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups

Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(Node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(Node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



Assess and Reflect

Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:



- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What National Point in Time Count resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example, if you participated in or helped lead a Point in Time Count, what could you do to help people experiencing homelessness now that you have fresh perspective? What other organizations and programs could you partner with to provide much needed services?

Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a Point in Time Count event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered you service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>)

43 reads

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